ECUADOR - HACIENDA ZULETA

ITINERARY

The collection point for the ride can be Quito airport or Quito city and we can arrange transfers for you.

Hacienda Zuleta is situated in the Northern Highlands, about two hours from the capital. The hacienda stands at roughly at the same altitude as Quito (c. 2,800m).

Your flights can arrive and depart at any time.

Check-in to your room is possible from 15:00, although you may arrive earlier if you wish and make use of the main facilities until your room is ready. On departure day, you will need to vacate your room by midday so that it can be made ready for arriving guests.

If your Spanish is good enough you may prefer to take a taxi to Hacienda Zuleta. It would be advisable to agree a price before setting off. If you plan on this option you should let us know the estimated time of your arrival, so that we can be sure a representative of Hacienda Zuleta will be on hand to meet you and show you to your room etc.

The itinerary is flexible, taking into account guest preferences, riding level and the weather. On some days you will set out on morning and afternoon rides returning to the hacienda for lunch (total c. 3-4 hours). On other days you may go out on full day rides with a picnic lunch (total c. 5-6 hours). Depending on which routes you ride, you could be in the saddle for between around 2 and 6 hours.

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The chagras speak only Spanish and so we would recommend that you pre-book an English-speaking riding guide to accompany you. This needs to be booked and paid for in advance.

As well as trail rides, carriage rides (min 3 people) and riding lessons are usually available. The riding and non-riding activities you would like to do can be decided once you are at the hacienda.

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If there is time on your first day you may have an introduction to the horses and chagras, followed by a familiarisation ride. Thereafter the rides vary every day, according to the season and wishes of the guests.

Local conditions can sometimes cause variation in the riding routes, hours in the saddle and distances covered, but any changes are made with your best interests in mind. There are many long and short routes from the hacienda into the surrounding hills, communities and up into the paramo (high Andes). The following is a description of some of the possible rides you might do (there are many more). The order of the rides is not set and these are only a few examples:

Lake View (full day) - Follow a route up Mount Cubilche, past eucalyptus groves with views of Ibarra, Mount Cayambe and Mount Antisana. On the other side of Cubilche is San Pablo Lake - set in a wide basin surrounded by volcanoes, which provides a scenic back-drop for your picnic lunch. Later, return to Zuleta by a different route.

La Chimba (full day) - Ride through the pastures and forests of La Merced to Pesillo, with its quaint cemetery and communally-owned hacienda. At La Chimba, visit the resting place of Tránsito Amaguaña, a local herione who fought for the rights of her people. There is a little museum, along with beautiful murals. After lunch, make your way back to Zuleta.

Mount Cubilche (full day) - Ride uphill, over a plateau dotted with wild flowers, through pine forests and onto the páramo (high grasslands). From here there are views of the entire valley - from Ibarra, Angochagua and Zuleta, to

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Cayambe. At the very top, three lakes form part of the volcano's caldera. After lunch, take a different route home.

Zuleta to Cusin (full day) - ride through the village and along the side of Mount Cubilche. Winding your way towards Hacienda Cusin, a seventeenth-century estate full of charm with sumptuous gardens and colonial rooms. After a picnic lunch, take a stroll to discover Cusin and later, return to Zuleta by a different route.

Condor Project (half day) - ride through Zuleta's pastures, milking sheds and trout farm via pretty cobblestone roads. Along the way, learn about local wildlife and the efforts to protect and nurture endangered condors and spectacled bears. This ride includes a talk at the Condor Huasi facility.

Mount Cunrro (half day) - pass through the village and begin climbing through pastures and fields towards Mount Cunrro, an extinct volcano. Cunrro dominates this side of the valley - a vast, conical hill jutting from the foot of Mount Imbabura and surrounded by woodland at its base. At the summit, enjoy views of Zuleta's green, furrowed mountains.

Rounding Up the Herd (short ride)

La Manada (the herd) makes its way past the pastures and Caranqui mounds in the early morning, when mists often cover the mountainside. Join a chagra as he rounds up the hacienda's herd of over forty Zuleteño horses from their pastures amongst the pyramids and drives them back to the Hacienda. If you would like to take part, please inform your host a day in advance.

Hacienda Zuleta dates back to the 17th Century and has been home to two former presidents of Ecuador.

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Zuleta's main courtyard

This traditional hacienda has 21 guest rooms, as well as characterful lounges and living rooms, two dining rooms and a library.

One of the lounge areas

There are two Standard Rooms, ten Deluxe Rooms, seven Junior Suites and two Suites. There are no twin rooms in the Standard Room category.

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One of the living rooms, with the library above

Each room has a private bathroom with bathtub or shower. Bathrooms are equipped with towels, bathrobes, shampoo, body lotion, soap, shower gel/bubble bath, shower cap and hairdryer.

One of the Standard Rooms

The guest rooms are located in the main hacienda building which dates back to 1691. Each room has its own fireplace and is individually decorated with antique furniture, with views of the gardens or the mountains beyond.

A typical Deluxe Room

Some rooms have direct access to the gardens, whilst others have a private terrace or seating in one of the courtyards. It is lovely to relax on the terrace with a cup of coffee and watch long-tailed hummingbirds flit between the feeders.

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One of the Junior Suites

Satellite television, films and games are available in one of the living rooms, as well as coffee, soft drinks and bar drinks. There is also an onsite spa at Hacienda Zuleta offering various treatments.

The spa area

Outside there is even more to see, from the dairy and organic vegetable gardens, to the working farm and pre-Inca Caranqui Mounds.

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View of the hacienda from the stables

You will be transferred to Quito airport.

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